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THOUGHTS

ON THE

PRESENT WAR

WITH

FRANCE;

AN

EXPOSTULATORY LETTER,

ADDRESSED TO THE

Right Hon. WILLIAM, PITT, M. P.

Comme toutes les choſes humaines ont une fin, l'état dont nous parlons perdra ſa liberté, il périra. Rome, Lacedemone et Carthage, ont bien péri. Il périra, lorſque la puiſſance légiſlative ſera plus corrompue que l'exécutrice.

MONTESQUIEU.

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THOUGHTS

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Patere tua consilia non sentis?

CICERO IN CATILINAM.

SIR,

AS I acknowledge that this address is not intended for your instruction, but for the information of those whom it is, no doubt, very desirable to some to keep in ignorance, you will be so indulgent as to excuse the repetition of many arguments already very familiar to you, though not to those for whom I write.

It is not my intention to enter into a long dissertation of French principles, or to attempt their justification as an argument against the

war; at the ſame time I would not have it inferred, that I ſhould conſider it a difficult taſk to defend them againſt the miſconſtruction and obloquy they have incurred from pride, intereſt, and ignorance.

There is no neceſſity for new arguments to defend the doctrine of equality as profeſſed by the French; but as it is a perpetual object of calumny of the moſt groſs nature, I ſhall bring in review a few obſervations in its defence, that I own have been already much more forcibly urged from other quarters.

Nothing, one would imagine, could be more obvious to the plaineſt underſtanding, than that equality precludes of neceſſity the power of one man doing an injury to another. Would any one have ſuppoſed that ſuch wanton perverſion could have attacked ſo incontrovertible and juſt a principle? But when men have ſo plain and direct a motive for confounding things in themſelves perfectly

diſtinct, the only misfortune is, that thoſe who have no ſuch motive, ſhould ſuffer themſelves to be duped; but induſtrious as the miſrepreſentation has been, it is ſo very ſuperficial, that the impoſture is already in a great degree detected. If equality in France implied the various crimes and abſurdities with which it is charged, it would be impoſſible to believe that any ſuperior orders or powers exiſted in that country, or that any military ſubordination ſhould be found in her armies.

The French have fully explained the doctrine of equality, and I ſhall be one of thoſe who will feel the moſt ſevere diſappointment if they ſhould ultimately prove unſucceſsful in eſtabliſhing a wiſe, juſt, and efficient government upon this generous principle.

Equality means with the French a right in every man, either by himſelf or his repreſentative, to concur in forming the laws.

Theſe

Theſe laws upon *their* ſyſtem are to afford equal protection, and require equal obedience; but the great objection againſt this equality is, an inſinuation that it extends to property, ſo that no one is to poſſeſs ſecurely the fruits of his induſtry. This aſſertion needs no other comment than to declare it to be founded in entire falſehood, which thoſe who read the intended conſtitution of France will in a moment diſcover.

It is very true, that the French having deemed hereditary right in the oldeſt branch of a family excluſively, a very dangerous cauſe of accumulating too much wealth by individuals, and of conſequence incompatible with the nature of equality, have oppoſed ſome legal checks to this ſource of corruption. Theſe reſtraints I have well conſidered, and believe them to be ſuch as reaſon and virtue approve, for their only object appears to be to prevent one man from being above the law, while he places another below it.

At different periods of the Revolution, many crimes have been excited by profligate, incendiary characters, who ſtirred up the people to acts of fury and barbarity; the latter, whoſe ſufferings had been great, and their patience exhauſted by various injuries and reiterated treachery, were eaſily miſled. But what have the crimes that followed to do with the principle of equality? Thoſe who judge rightly will ever conſider it an abandonment of that principle, for one man to act unjuſtly or cruelly to another. Equality teaches to do as we would be done unto; it has better ſuited certain purpoſes to vilify and traduce French principles, than to expoſe to juſt and merited contempt many wretches in France, whoſe conduct has entirely violated thoſe principles.

I ſhall not treſpaſs longer on your time by an examination of *French*, but proceed to what have, I fear, lately become much more queſtionable, namely, *Britiſh principles*; or what

what is virtually the ſame, the conduct of the Britiſh miniſters, which is to me moſt ſerious ground of alarm.

So long as I feel uneaſy and diſſatisfied with your *meaſures*, and diſcover no evident ſigns of retraction, but, on the contrary, an open avowal of intended perſeverance; inadequate as I may prove to the taſk of any ſucceſsful oppoſition, I ſhall, at leaſt, as a conſcientious duty, direct my utmoſt efforts againſt them. Nothing is more truly abhorrent from my diſpoſition, than to traduce the character of any man, and I would wiſh, if poſſible, in endeavouring to eſtabliſh an impartial and juſt notion of your conduct, as principal miniſter of Great Britain, to eſcape the imputation of either malevolent or intereſted views: but as it would be in vain for an anonymous writer to diſclaim improper motives, the defence of my obſervations muſt reſt upon the degree of conviction that they bring to the unprejudiced. In ſhort, I prediſ-

poſe

poſe my readers to examine what I advance, with diſtruſt, by having choſen a fictitious ſignature, which may juſtly be held in contempt, from the daily anonymous ſlander that is ſuffered to wound the reputation, as well as to affect the ſecurity of private individuals. As for my real name, it would not ſanction, and I perſuade myſelf could not diſgrace my political ſentiments; but this totally out of the queſtion, it appears to me, that an honeſt man, who ſpeaks the truth openly at this time, has more courage than common prudence. When there is more to dread than the moſt rigorous interpretation of the laws of the country, it is better not to offer any open reſiſtance to prejudice and error, but wait till the momentary deluſion that has been ſo artfully ſpread over our credulous, unſuſpecting countrymen has left room for ſober reflection and returning reaſon. When they have once beheld, (and the time ſeems nearly arrived) in a proper point of view, the indelible infamy of ſome late proceedings, by which

they were ſo inſidiouſly, craftily, and knaviſhly ſeparated on a queſtion, which, above all others, demanded the cloſeſt union, namely, parliamentary reform; they will feel ſhame and regret that they have been ſo inconſiderate as to quarrel with each other—to entertain hard and ungenerous diſtruſt of their neighbours—to plant thorns in each other's families—to become the diſhonourable tools of deſigning men—to quit the open, friendly, and ingenuous behaviour of Engliſhmen, and aſſume the degrading character of ſpies and informers—as ſlaviſh conditions of converſation and ſocial intercourſe have been impoſed, as if we felt the power of the inquiſitors of Portugal and Spain!

Combinations of great and powerful men againſt the people have prevailed in all times and all countries. We know well that religion has been made ſubſervient to bigotry, ſuperſtition, and fanaticiſm in the people, and ſupported the ambition and tyranny of their rulers

for

for many ages. Who would credit, if hiſtory did not record, that the blood and treaſure of this country have been ſo often waſted in former times, in ſupport of ſacerdotal ſupremacy? At length the evil, inveterate as it was, yielded to the ſpirit of innovation. This proves to our ſatisfaction, that an authority exerciſed over men, may not, becauſe it has long exiſted, be beneficial to ſociety, but in proportion more dangerous as cuſtom and prejudice may have rendered it more difficult to remove. At preſent, ſtateſmen have a weak handle in this country in religious ſuperſtition, ſo that a different ſpecies muſt be reſorted to, which threatens to be as baneful as the former, if not guarded againſt in time, to the quiet and repoſe of mankind. We are called upon to admire and place implicit confidence in the wiſdom of our anceſtors, and to tremble at diſturbing the glorious fabrick they have tranſmitted to their degenerate race. Thus political ſuperſtition is to ſuperſede the ſpirit of inquiry, and though we

have already very freely ſacrificed many leſſons that they deemed important for our welfare, both here and hereafter, the reſt it appears are to be conſidered infallible.

For the ineſtimable inſtitution of trial by jury, every age muſt revere the memory of our anceſtors, though we ſeem inclined at preſent to render ourſelves unworthy of it, by ceaſing to give the protection to each other that is in our power. I wiſh with all my heart that Mr. Pitt would pay more reſpect to this great portion of our inheritance, which he is ſo induſtriouſly undermining by the extenſion of the exciſe laws. He ſays I *muſt* have more money; the government *muſt* be ſupported—Oh, that the people of England would once declare as with one voice, you *muſt not* nor *ſhall not* invade our liberties! we will not ſurrender the ſmalleſt portion, or ſuffer the moſt diſtant infringement of the trial by jury! It is in vain for you to plead revenue—we plead the liberty and happineſs of ourſelves

and

and children who are to follow us—we will cheerfully pay you as much in taxes as can be ſpared from the induſtry of a free people; and experience has proved that arbitrary and oppreſſive means will in the end leſſen, inſtead of augment the revenue of any country. Monteſquieu ſays, "*Parce qu'on a tiré de "grands tributs, on en a voulu tirer d'ex- "ceſſifs: et meconnoiſſant la main de la liberté "qui faiſait ce preſent, on ſ'eſt addreſſé à la "ſervitude qui refuſe tout.*"—"Great taxes "have been raiſed, and in conſequence all "ſenſe of moderation has been given up: "having at length forgotten the beneficent "hand of liberty who made this rich preſent, "ſlavery has been ſolicited for her aid, but, "alas! ſhe has nothing to beſtow." Let, therefore, Mr. Pitt, or any other miniſter, be anſwered, that if money be wanted, he has only two reſources to ſupply his deficiencies, namely, frugality and the freedom of the people. I will not, however, paſs over this article as if I was inclined to rob you of

a juſt tribute of praiſe. No, Sir, I would rather ſpeak well than ill of your actions, and I take this occaſion of ſaying, I feel a grateful ſenſe of your ſupport of Mr. Fox's libel bill, for I own, that ſituated as you are, and were at that time, your oppoſition would have been fatal to the ſucceſs of that or any other object of great public utility.

To our anceſtors we, as well as the world, are indebted for the idea of a repreſentative government, and to the corruption and depravity of latter times, that we retain of ſuch government the *idea* without the *practice.* Is it not a revolting truth, that at various diſtant periods of our hiſtory, the repreſentation of the people has been much more independent and equal than at preſent? If, therefore, our forefathers, chained down by their ſtrong religious prejudices in favour of the divine rights of popes and kings, could thus oppoſe a barrier to lawleſs ambition, what degree of energy ought Engliſhmen now to poſſeſs?

No

No one will dare to ſay, that more general happineſs than at preſent poſſeſſed by the people has not been enjoyed at ſome former times, but much leſs on his finite knowledge and comprehenſion to limit the future improvements that Providence may vouchſafe to mankind. This I addreſs to the arrogant, prejudiced, and hypocritical, who, while they affect with ſupercilious contempt to dread the dangers of innovation, dare to arreſt the intellectual faculty of man; they ſpeak as if they were his creator, and ſay, "We give thee power over the beaſts of the "field and the birds of the air, but touch not "the tree of knowledge." Let not thy audacious preſuming mind attempt to examine or queſtion the perfection placed in the Britiſh conſtitution, as it ſtands now, compoſed of a King, a Houſe of Lords, and Houſe of Commons.

It by no means comes within my preſent plan to examine whether ſuch a ſyſtem of go-

vernment

vernment be the beſt that can be deviſed, but I will venture to ſay that it is capable of producing much happier effects than at preſent are experienced from its operation. At the ſame time, thoſe are welcome who chuſe to beſtow their ſenſeleſs adulatory compliments on its perfection, to which it has no kind of pretenſion. Let any one read the hiſtory of it, and he muſt be convinced that were it poſſible to fix the component powers in the moſt perfect equilibrium, they would not, as far as we can judge from the paſt, act together for twelve months, without ſome one of them gaining an aſcendency or undue influence, ſo as to counteract the intended effect. It is for this reaſon, Mr. Pitt, that I would wiſh you to let the French try if they cannot contrive ſomething better; this would be much wiſer than your confidence in the perfection of our conſtitution, and on this condition I ſhould willingly ſuſpend my notions of its defects.

To the Britiſh government I allow greater negative than poſitive excellence; to ſay that I prefer it to either the former deſpotiſm or preſent anarchy and faction of France, is no more than truth; to compare it alſo with the principal governments of Europe, and allow its ſuperiority, is eaſy; but let us not therefore conceal the truth—our manufacturers are preparing to emigrate to America, and many even to France. The teſt and corporation acts cannot fail to drive the diſſenters out of the kingdom as ſoon as they can find the means of ſubſiſtence in another country. I believe they begin to entirely deſpair of what they conceive common juſtice being done to them here; but, indeed, the people in general perceive that the ſtate veſſel is a melancholy proof of the devaſtations committed by time, that ſhe is old and moſt dreadfully ſhattered, and what is worſt, an unſkilful pilot at the helm ſeems to make it his buſineſs to run her among rocks and quickſands.

From the foregoing obſervations, I mean to infer nothing farther than that the public were moſt precipitate and unguarded when they lately bellowed and joined the clamour of placemen and penſioners. If, inſtead of the ſtratagem of alarming and terrifying the people reſpecting the plot on the Tower, and horrid conſpiracies againſt the king and conſtitution, things which were then, and have been ever ſince more known by their *immenſe notoriety* than by the poſſibility of getting hold of one ſingle plain proof; you had, like a plain downright honeſt man, gratified the wiſh of your country, and fulfilled your former promiſes of reforming abuſes, you would not have ſtood in need of Mr. Reeves's aſſociation, or any of its rotten affiliated branches; a general and unanimous aſſociation of the people of England would have ſtood forth, determined with their lives to maintain their conſtitution *as long as they thought proper*, but at all times their independence as a nation. For myſelf, I am equally averſe to ſee the

French here, whether with bayonets, or the kiſs of fraternity; the latter will not at preſent ſuit my taſte, as I cannot but feel very diffident of their affection to ſtrangers, if they do not exhibit better ſpecimens of kindneſs to one another.

I ſhall now proceed to the main object of this addreſs, which is to endeavour to prove, by all the arguments I can adduce, the indiſpenſible neceſſity of an immediate peace with France, on the baſis of the reciprocal independence of the two nations. The war with France, or to ſpeak more unexceptionably, the continuance of it, if it can be avoided, is founded in ignorance, wickedneſs, and entire dereliction of the principle of its commencement.

It may perhaps be conſidered as a vain attempt to endeavour to offer any new argument in refutation of the objections againſt treating with the executive council of France.

I own that this ſubject has met already with ample diſcuſſion, and you muſt excuſe me if I incline to believe that, however, through *exiſting circumſtances* you may make a ſhew of reſiſtance to the powerful and convincing reaſons that have been lately brought forward in the Houſe; you have, however, felt their unanſwerable force. It is well for you that many ſave themſelves the trouble of reflection, and with that generous confidence that has too long characteriſed the Engliſh, repoſe their concerns in the hands of Mr. Pitt, chiefly, as I ſuppoſe, becauſe his father was a patriot, and an honeſt man, though he himſelf has ſcarcely been any thing better than a *boy of promiſe*. Now, if they would be ſo kind to themſelves as to admit only the poſſibility that the opinions and intereſt of the miniſter may accidentally be at variance, and that in conſequence, the former may be much the cheapeſt ſacrifice, they would, perhaps, as I do, give you credit for ſuperior abilities and clear diſcernment of the public intereſt,

oftener

oftener than of convenient opportunities of properly employing them; they would reflect, that in innumerable inſtances of the characters of men in power, pride, ambition, and avarice have ſtifled and abſorbed every virtuous propenſity.

I do not preſume to offer a few plain truths and general maxims to your conſideration under the impreſſion that I am capable of furniſhing you with information thereon that you *really* ſtand in need of: my deſign is to inculcate them on the minds of thoſe who are not *in appearance* only, but in reality uninformed; and having very ſmall literary pretenſions, I avail myſelf of the celebrity of your name, as an obſcure author who promiſes himſelf great patronage from an epiſtle dedicatory to a great man.

I hope no advantage can be taken of the manner in which I propoſe to purſue my arguments. I have already ſtated an opinion,

that

that the continuance of the war will be both ignorant and wicked if it can be averted; and, for the ſake of illuſtration of the reaſons I have to urge, permit me to ſay that you are a moſt ignorant and moſt wicked miniſter if you loſe any honourable occaſion of reſtoring this country to the deſirable bleſſings of peace; but, in the mean time, I ſhall take the ground of arguing with you under the perſuaſion, which is, I own, merely an hypotheſis, that you intend at all events to make war with France with views of influencing or directing to your own purpoſes her internal concerns, and that for this object you will ſacrifice the lives and property of the people of this country: in ſuch a caſe I ſhall boldly venture an opinion, in the firſt place, that you are *a moſt ignorant miniſter.* Some I know would not confine themſelves to the preſent ſubject to eſtabliſh this point, but would go farther back for many ſtrong collateral incidents to give ſome colour to their propoſition.

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The chief, or, I think, ſole reaſon, or rather *pretext*, that you have aſſigned againſt treating with France at this moment, is, that the ſituation of that country renders it impoſſible to ſecure any proſpect of permanent or ſolid peace; that the executive council is only proviſional, and that a change of men may reverſe in a very ſhort time what you had done, and render a treaty uſeleſs. Pray, Sir, would you think it fair if the French were to ſtart the ſame objections againſt treating with the Britiſh cabinet; for I think it very likely that the ſucceſſors of yourſelf and colleagues may as much diſapprove of your general meaſures as thoſe who follow the preſent council of France are likely to do of theirs; but this objection I conſider unbecoming and unconſtitutional in you as a miniſter, who ought as much as the French council to conſider yourſelf on probation; for, in my apprehenſion, his Majeſty may very ſoon diſcover ſome very cogent reaſons for diſmiſſing his preſent ad-

viſers from his councils. Let this be as it may, it appears to me unprecedented, and perfectly anomalous, to admit ſuch an objection in bar to a treaty between the exiſting and reigning powers of two nations. To me it ſeems ſtrange that men can be blinded by a pretext, which, though at firſt bluſh it may appear ſpecious, is abſolutely and entirely foreign and irrelevant to the merits of the queſtion—the fallacy of it is broad and palpable.

You have diſclaimed, and I ſhall be truly happy to diſcover proofs of your ſincerity, the murderous ſentiments of a war of extermination, of which this country has felt the diſgrace of being ſuſpected. You have alſo acknowledged that we have no controul or authority over the interior police of France. Where, then, is the difficulty of treating, unleſs you mean to ſtipulate ſuch conditions as not only the preſent, or any future executive govern-

government in France, but that the French nation itſelf under any rulers will feel injurious?

I would wiſh to know upon what principles, or with what expectations, this country at any time could treat with the Houſe of Bourbon under the family compact? Surely it is well known that the French were then our inveterate enemies, and that peace was merely a ſuſpenſion of hoſtilities until they could recruit their forces and finances ſo as to annoy us more effectually—that the two nations were taught to behold each other as rivals—that, independent of ſuch inherent cauſe of wars between them, the cabinet of Verſailles was time immemorial ambitious, intriguing, and reſtleſs—that many wars, of which ſhe was the exciter, have ariſen from ſuch wanton, frivolous cauſes, that, for the honour of humanity and common decency, muſt be paſſed over in ſilence.—Have we treated with ſuch a power, though our known

and inveterate enemy, and can we find it inconſiſtent to treat with thoſe who at leaſt profeſs a deſire to be our friends? Why have we formerly treated with France?—for the moſt obvious reaſon—peace has ever been the higheſt intereſt of this country, and we were glad to procure it for as long a continuance as we could, if not ſo long as we wiſhed—we then conſidered what alone ſound policy requires that we ſhould now conſider, how to avail ourſelves to the utmoſt of peace, and to guard againſt any formidable preparations of the powers who were likely to diſturb us. In the preſent caſe, in ſpite of all that can be ſaid, it is a ſtriking fact that we have provoked a war. Some ſay that it would have been inevitable in a year or two; but admitting this to be true, for which I am yet to learn the reaſons, it concludes nothing, in my idea, in favour of the neceſſity of its being undertaken ſo long as it could be avoided. Let thoſe who are moſt hoſtile to the French, if they prefer the welfare of this country to

vengeance againſt a people already overwhelmed with afflictions, explain how our triumph could be more complete. We either were, or profeſſed to be, paying off ſome part of our dreadful debt—a few taxes had been taken off; and, ſmall as they were, the hearts of the people began to expand with the cheering proſpect of being alleviated from part of the burthen under which they had groaned—the national credit ſtood high, and, from the adventitious ſituation of the powers of Europe, our reſources as a commercial country, and means of increaſing proſperity, were great beyond former example. During this period our old enemies and rivals, to uſe an expreſſion of Lord Grenville's, were even fighting with their capital, or, in other words, I ſuppoſe, for their very exiſtence as a nation.

If you have ſacrificed the immenſe intereſt of our ſhipping and manufactures to involve us in a war, to avoid which, in my plain conception, required a ſacrifice totally inſignifi-

cant, except perhaps in your own eyes, namely, the pride, loftineſs, and etiquette of certain individuals ; you ought at leaſt, on cooler recollection, to acknowledge, that the ſooner you are actuated by different motives, the better it will be for this country. You muſt excuſe others who do not happen to ſee things through that medium which has made you ſo very clear-ſighted reſpecting the balance of power, the ſafety of our allies, the tranquillity of Europe, and other matters in which you have aſtoniſhed the world, and ſo conſiſtently diſplayed your profound reſearch and impenetrable depth in the arcana of ſtate affairs. Every one believes that your natural viſion would never have penetrated ſo far ; and the general opinion is, that your optics have been greatly aſſiſted by a treaſury glaſs.

To reſume my ſubject, permit me to ſubmit to your conſideration in what way your objections to treating with the French may, as I apprehend, be fully and entirely obviated.

ated. Endeavour to eſtabliſh a reciprocity of independence, ſecurity, and intereſts for the two nations as far as they can depend upon each other. This, probably, may be a novel idea in ſtate affairs; but if our own welfare and proſperity eſſentially depend on peace and ſecurity, it appears of irrefragable demonſtration, and the plaineſt deduction of reaſoning, that every ſiniſter view, every inferior object, ought to give way to their attainment. If this ſhould be the baſis of a treaty with the French, reſt aſſured it is of extreme indifference through what agents you negotiate. Different parties may prevail; another revolution of the government may happen; but ſo long as it ſtops ſhort of deſpotiſm, which I pray God it always may, the nation itſelf will do juſtice to ſuch an alliance. Don't ſtartle at the word *alliance*; but permit me to ſuggeſt to you, as a firm opinion, not haſtily taken up, and, I flatter myſelf, far from ſingular, that France is the country of Europe with which we can beſt treat, perhaps

I may

I may ſay, the only one, for the protection of our own national independence; not only this, but for unbounded advantages to our commercial and manufacturing intereſts. Above all, what feelings ought to be awakened in the generous boſoms of Engliſhmen, when they conſider that we have no other effectual means left to repreſs and keep in awe the direful projects of arbitrary powers, who threaten to govern all Europe with iron, and trample under foot every good that human nature is capable of enjoying.

If you promote the plan I recommend, the moſt ordinary capacity can anticipate the clear and ſubſtantial benefits that will reſult from it. Experience has demonſtrated how beneficial commercial intercourſe with France is capable of becoming. That country poſſeſſes great productions, and of ſolid and intrinſic value in commerce. England has raw materials which coſt her little, but when they have paſſed the hands of our ingenious and laborious

laborious artificers and manufacturers, are capable of procuring us the luxuries of France, by the moſt deſirable of all means, the employment and induſtry of our people.

In offering theſe apparent advantages to your conſideration, I neither mean to undervalue, or take the attention of the public from the importance of promoting a commercial treaty with Spain, which is now talked off. With reſpect to that kingdom, if I can form any juſt notion of the relative political ſituation of Europe, ſhe will find her intereſt in aiding our endeavours to prevent the diſmemberment of France, at leaſt if ſhe does not, as England ſeems to do at preſent, chuſe to renounce her weight in the ſcale of nations.

Let us for a moment contemplate the reverſe of what might be, with what poſſibly may happen.—The independence of France deſtroyed, and the country delivered up a

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prey to the leading powers on the continent. What advantage to your country is to be derived from Ruſſia, ſhould ſhe become powerful enough to dictate her will as ſhe has done to Poland? What from Auſtria, who, to ſecure her aggrandizement, will readily divide the ſpoil of nations with that already dangerous empire, and thereby ſecure her ſhare? This may appear to ſome mere fiction; and I wiſh they may poſſeſs ſolid and ſubſtantial reaſons for conſidering it ſuch. In my apprehenſion it is not ſo, but merits more ſerious reflection than ſeems to be beſtowed upon it. It is a fallacious and idle dream to ſuppoſe that our maritime force can protect us againſt all poſſible danger. It has done, and may to a certain point; but would prove an inadequate barrier againſt an invaſion of half a million of armed ruffians, bred up to, and determined on plunder and devaſtation.

Independent of any excluſive advantages that may be gained immediately from France,

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it offers itſelf to my mind, that the general commercial intereſts of this country will hazard an entire extinction by the conqueſt and ſubjugation of that power, unleſs it can be proved, which I boldly defy, that ſuch an event is unconnected with the fate of England. Our independence, oppoſed to the concert of powers againſt liberty, will hang only by a thread when France is fallen.

Liberty and commerce are ſo nearly allied, that the latter has at one time or another explored almoſt every part of the world to follow the abode of the former. If the combined armies ſucceed in their deſigns on France, where is the power that either can or will ſave us from the wreck? How ſtem the torrent? You yourſelf have evidently diſcovered ſome degree of danger. You have, *perhaps unintentionally*, aroufed ſome of your unthinking admirers out of doors, by ſubſcribing to the univerſal indignation againſt the deteſtable infamy and injuſtice of the partition of Poland.

When the combined powers, with whom we have now the honour to co-operate, have ſeized on all the ſtrong places of France, ſo that they may either annex that country to their dominion, or at leaſt direct its force by indirect influence in the government; for this no doubt is the only aſſiſtance we can derive from theſe ruffians in the preſent war; has your conſummate prudence beforehand regulated their ſubſequent operations? perhaps you may then deem it neceſſary to ſay to Ruſſia and Auſtria, Go home again, you have fulfilled the object of your divine miſſion; you have ſet up a king, and all is well again. It would be unfortunate if they ſhould return us the following plain anſwer: "What art "thou, inſignificant power, that dareſt with "unparalleled effrontery to obtrude imperti-"nent advice upon the ſovereigns of the "earth? Prepare in turn to ſubmit thy neck "to our imperial yoke, or myriads of our "myrmidons, ready at a nod, ſhall march "to London, and leave the moſt *ever memo-*

"*rable*

" *rable* example of our vengeance againſt that " proud city and its inhabitants."

Before I diſmiſs this part of my letter, I cannot avoid beſtowing a few remarks that ſuggeſted themſelves to my mind in conſequence of your ſpeech in the Houſe on the ſubject of Mr. Sheridan's motion reſpecting Lord Auckland's declaration to the States General. The impreſſion I felt was greatly different from the triumph that ſome indulged in having extorted an expoſition of your principles as to the proſecution of the war; which, if not cautiouſly watched, may, I apprehend, lead to more dangerous conſequences than an open declaration that it is a war of extermination. The humanity and ſpirit of the people would ſoon revolt at the latter; but if they are to be amuſed with your ſpecious commiſeration of Poland, and ſeeming acquieſcence in ſome general maxims of liberty, they may be more ſucceſsfully led to their ruin; for it is of no conſequence on

earth on what private views or opinions the war is continued—all the danger reſts in its being continued at all, ſo long as the object of the powers with which we act unavoidably leads to the general calamity of Europe.

Innumerable farther obſervations might be adduced in ſupport of my firſt propoſition ; but they are unneceſſary with thoſe who do not obſtinately ſhut their minds againſt conviction. In Mr. Pitt I acknowledge ſplendid talents. He is a ſcholar and an orator, and has been called the heaven-born miniſter ; but I truſt I have nevertheleſs demonſtrated, that if we dared to reſt our opinion on his late meaſures, I ſhould be juſtified in aſſerting, that he is the moſt ignorant miniſter that ever preſumed to meddle in the affairs of a great nation.

I feel a certain repugnance in treating my ſecond propoſition, as I firſt intended, becauſe I am naturally averſe to permit any preſumptive evidence, or inferences, however clear to my own ideas, as ſufficient ground to attack

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the moral character of any man. Others might not feel the ſame indulgence for errors, eſpecially thoſe of Mr. Pitt; but as I know no authority by which wickedneſs can be poſitively inferred from ignorance, I relinquiſh my propoſition, that you are a *moſt wicked miniſter*.

If, indeed, I had authority to declare that the preſent war is proſecuted from the vile and execrable motives of pride, intereſt, and ambition, oppoſed to your clear conviction of its injuſtice, I would addreſs myſelf to you thus:—Preſumptuous wicked man, who dareſt thus to ſport with the lives and happineſs of thy fellow creatures! is not war the moſt dreadful ſcourge of the human race? How have you proved that this dire calamity was unavoidable? The French nation, ſurrounded with enemies, declared that ſhe would rejoice to be at peace with England; that ſhe was ready to enter into an open and free explanation of every real or ſuppoſed injury

jury that could be complained of by us in her conduct : and did you not inſultingly tell her, that thoſe whom ſhe had delegated to appeaſe your anger, and offer terms of amity for the two nations, were too contemptible to be liſtened to ? Are you ſure that the Britiſh nation approved of this unprovoked affront to France ? We admit, indeed, that the crimes of her rulers have outraged humanity and juſtice ; but remember that you have declared, that you do not conſider theſe as acts of the French nation, which ſooner or later will certainly do juſtice to her own honour, by puniſhing them, or at leaſt by preventing their repetition. To you, Sir, this avenging power does not belong; nor can it even be attempted without ſacrificing many thouſands of innocent victims of both countries. Our armies may bleed and conquer, but where meet with the juſt objects of vengeance ? Muſt they wade through blood and ſlaughter until they reach Paris ? The aſſaſſins will be fled, and our troops muſt follow with fire and

ſword, ſpreading terror and deſolation in purſuit of thoſe abominable regicides. But can you ſo unfeelingly ſacrifice the nation, which juſtly diſputes your authority? Why uſurp what belongs *ſolely* to herſelf? No doubt you dread leſt the French nation ſhould not gratify the full meaſure of your vindictive paſſion; but is your fury ſo untractable as to doubt the juſtice of Providence, which either now, or hereafter, will appoint a day of retribution? What are you, proud inflated inſect, whoſe breath is in your noſtrils, who were born yeſterday, and will be gone tomorrow, that you thus affect to be arbiter of the fate of millions? Have you a conſcience? Did you ever behold the horrors of a ſingle campaign? Have you beheld thouſands ſlain, and weltering in their blood? Did you ever hear the piercing cries and hollow groans of the wounded? Have you ſeen famine and diſeaſe run through the ranks, and render them moſt horridly frightful and ghaſtly? Did you ever viſit the widows and orphans

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of theſe unfortunate victims, and there behold an helpleſs forlorn family, deprived of the ſupport of the laborious mechanic or peaſant? Could you have the heart to ſee one of your tax-gatherers ſtrip this devoted family of the poor ſcanty remains of the ſoldier's former induſtry? Are men made of ſteel? Surely they muſt, or the caſe of the honeſt tar, when firſt his eyes reviſit his native ſhore, after a long and painful voyage, would move us. We ſee him dragged like a ſlave, nay, a malefactor, on board a tender, inſtead of receiving the expected welcome from his wife and children, the thoughts of which cheered his voyage. This is, or ought to be, affecting, where humanity, reaſon, or, as you expreſs yourſelf, *true religion* were ever felt. Theſe, Sir, are neither ſentiments of effeminacy or cowardice. When our country *really* calls, every claim upon us, nay, life itſelf, ought to yield to the imperious demand of neceſſity. I repeat the word *neceſſity*; for nothing ſhort can juſtify war, except among ſavages, who, like

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the brute creation, can be compelled by inſtinct alone to ſupply hunger, or ſome natural want.

Will you dare to ſay that man, rational as he is called, was created to become thus the ſavage ſport of man? Is it for this that the tender mother, with unceaſing anxiety, and often with aching heart, watches the different dangerous periods of our infancy? The fears and hopes of our parents evidently follow us as long as they and we exiſt, and nature ſeems to ſuffer a kind of convulſion when ſickneſs, age, or even natural decay, ſeparates us from each other; thus nature proves her inherent and immutable laws for the conſervation of her works; but *cuſtom*, that tyrant under whom all leſſer tyrants proſper, invades with impunity the laws of nature, and transforms man into the likeneſs of brute beaſt. Heaven grant that the time may come, when all nations ſhall combine their efforts to drag that hoary monſter from

his long uſurpation! artful, ſubtle tyrant, who, while he bids defiance to the reign of philoſophy, reaſon and humanity is occaſionally kind to us, and exhibits the wiſdom of experience for no other cauſe than to reconcile us to his chains.

The foregoing reflections are not faſhionable enough, I believe, to excite any thing better than a contemptuous ſmile of pity for the poor fellow who is giving himſelf the trouble to talk to great men about things unworthy of their condeſcenſion: but I have a ſecondary claſs of misfortunes to lay before you, in which you, Mr. Pitt, and other great men, may be more implicated than you are aware of; there can be no harm in deſiring you to take care of yourſelf.

Behold our diſtreſs and difficulties; where is the boaſted proſperity of the country? Fled like the baſeleſs fabric of a viſion—general bankruptcy begins to ſtare us in the

face—commerce and manufactures are vaniſhed.—Where are the means of paying the enormous taxes we groan under? The poor and middling order cannot ſupport a taxation to pay the intereſt of the national debt, and the enormous expences of government—the rich will ſupply the deficiency only by a loan, and you may judge of the future terms, when, perhaps, your credit will be rather low by the conditions of the laſt. You muſt clearly diſcover, that inſolvency, as well it might, was concealed under a fictitious paper wealth, far too heavily taxed to proſper. What human invention can ſerve you, if an addition of from one to five millions be added to the intereſt of the national debt by the continuance of war? As to paying off the principal, I fancy that all thoſe who, while they were found aſleep, were indulged with this pleaſant dream, are now pretty well awake, and perceive it was only a dream.

If you are the faithful ſervant of the crown, make the King acquainted with the ſituation of his people; the Engliſh are generous, humane, juſt, and obedient to the laws, and will ſupport the dignity of his crown and family with liberality, ſo long as they are able; but who can guide or direct the movements of deſpair and wretchedneſs?

I am not a little ſurprized at the bold and groſs miſconſtruction that Mr. Dundas has ventured to maintain reſpecting the numerous failures that have lately happened, which, with an ingenuity that proclaims how far his comprehenſion ſoars above vulgar reach, he has placed to the account of national proſperity. If, indeed, thoſe failures were confined to commercial houſes or manufacturers immediately connected with them, ſome partial colour might be given to his reaſoning. The immenſity of paper credit has, no doubt, afforded many opportunities of ruinous ſpeculations which can no way appertain in the

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preſent inquiry, but to thoſe who wiſh to form a juſt opinion on the ſubject, I recommend to read the names and occupations of the bankrupts for ſome time paſt—they will find them of a deſcription who have, by the aid of paper credit, put off the evil day; for ſcarcely is there a needy mechanic or ſhopkeeper who has not been in the habit of raiſing money by dealing in paper accommodation. When the circulation was ſtopped, what was to become of thoſe people, who, inſtead of knowing how to profit by ſuch a reſource, had only augmented the expences they were before unable to ſupport? It became an additional heavy tax upon them. Do not let any one ſuppoſe that I am haſtily, and without any qualification of the ſubject, entering my proteſt againſt the artificial capital of paper credit; its advantages are too well aſcertained to thouſands, or I may ſay to the community in general, for any one who is tolerably informed to entertain ſuch an idea. I know no better expedient to prevent monopoly, or afford

ford the means of diffuſion of commerce; artificial capital in the hands of the intelligent and induſtrious has been beneficially oppoſed to real capital. Theſe obſervations are extraneous from my ſubject, which I reſume by denying that any true or probable reaſon for the late failures, taken in a general view, can be aſſigned, except that the people are monſtrouſly taxed, and the neceſſaries of life in general ſo dear as to be out of the reach of the poor, and, indeed, too large a proportion of the middle claſs. This is a fact, let who may contradict it. If we had weekly returns of the private misfortunes or failures, as well as of bankrupts, people would ceaſe to ſtartle at the liſts exhibited in the Gazette; I believe I ſhould be within compaſs if I ſtated the difference to be a hundred fold taken numerically, and this is the juſteſt way of viewing the calamity, for it matters little of what deſcription a family *has been*, if ruined and reduced to want—I mean as far as relates to national proſperity.

I proceed

I proceed to my laſt propoſition, which is your dereliction of the principle on which the war was commenced : " The ambition " and conqueſts of France, and proſpect of her " farther aggrandizement to the high detri- " ment and imminent danger of this country, " its allies, and the independence of Europe " in general." This is all I can recollect of the cauſes aſſigned for our provoking a rupture. Have, or have not all theſe cauſes, if they were ever really cauſes, been long removed from the quarter firſt mentioned, and do they not every one exiſt in another quarter which you have made no oppoſition to ?

I am well aware of the kind of anſwer that is ready for theſe queſtions, if, indeed, to reply and anſwer be the ſame thing. " The " French declared war againſt us, and muſt " we proclaim ourſelves cowards and diſho- " nour the Britiſh nation by ſuing for peace, " or muſt we proſecute the war with vigour

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"to an honourable concluſion?" Theſe words have ſound, *vox et præterea nihil.* If cowardice attaches to the cauſe, it is, that Engliſhmen are taking the part of the ſtrongeſt againſt the weakeſt, and as for an honourable concluſion of the war, it is only attainable by ſtopping, if poſſible, the farther effuſion of human blood. The wiſdom of Great Britain at this time requires her to weigh accurately and impartially the juſt pretenſions of the different belligerent powers, and to propoſe, while her influence is likely to be reſpected, which may not be long, the terms of accommodation. I dare not, to be ſure, take the liberty of adviſing you to *propoſe* a ſeparate peace with the French, if the combined powers are determined to perſevere; but were I in your place, I ſhould be almoſt tempted to forego the conſideration of my own dignity and importance, to render ſo great a ſervice to my country.

But

But taking the moſt improbable view of the queſtion, which is, that peace with France cannot be obtained at this time on honourable terms, and ſuch as are conſiſtent with ſound policy; let any one prove that we have any buſineſs on the continent, except as formerly, it is merely to give a treat to our friends. But there may be a private underſtanding between you and them which you do not chuſe to let us into the ſecret of. Secrets are dangerous things, and I wiſh you had fewer of them.

The French are now acting entirely on the defenſive, if, therefore, our army is to ſerve for any uſeful purpoſe, let it be recalled home for our internal defence, inſtead of being waſted and diminiſhed where we have no eſſential object to contend for.

I hope you will not be offended at the plain homely ſtyle of this addreſs. After the public has ſo lately put by Mr. Burke's book, a man

ought to be careful how he explores the regions of fancy in order to embelliſh falſehood with the beauties, elegances, daintineſſes, and blandiſhments of the *ſtyle recherché*. I feel the poverty of my genius, and therefore always endeavour to confine myſelf to plain words, taking care, as much as I poſſibly can, to act under the dictates of truth, honeſty, and common ſenſe.

I am,

With great regard,

SIR,

Your moſt faithful ſervant,

AMICUS.

London, May 9, 1793.

POST:

POSTSCRIPT.

SINCE the foregoing ſheets went to the preſs, two authenticated letters of Le Brun, the French miniſter for foreign affairs, addreſſed to Lord Grenville, Secretary of State, have been made public. Theſe letters are for the expreſs purpoſe of opening a negociation for peace between the two countries, and I cannot but avail myſelf of offering ſome obſervations upon them, as their importance ſtrikes me, and I think muſt others, with irreſiſtible force.

Since the commencement of the war by this country, the atrocious views of the com-

bined powers have been ſo ſtrongly developed, and ſome of their actions ſo fully expoſed to day-light, as to draw from the moſt devoted adherents of government very marked cenſure; and in conſequence the war has every day become more unpopular. In ſhort, from a variety of circumſtances that did not come within the *uſual foreſight* of miniſters, one may now venture to conjecture that they wiſh for an opportunity of extricating the country and *themſelves* from the evils of their late precipitation.

Many that have already been made ſenſible of the innumerable miſchiefs which have ariſen from the war, and muſt increaſe by its continuance, ſtill retain ſentiments of pride which could not be reconciled to an offer being *firſt* made by this country for an accommodation. This difficulty, only important to thoſe who deem it more honourable to perſiſt in error than to relinquiſh

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it as ſoon as poſſible, is, however, very happily removed.

Let us briefly conſider what muſt be the conſequences of reſiſting the overtures that have been made. Firſt, I think it will not be denied that the war muſt be rendered infinitely more unpopular than it is even at preſent, for no one will doubt but private engagements with the Pruſſians and Auſtrians compel us to ſacrifice the intereſts of this country, which, perhaps, never before ſo imperiouſly and loudly called for a termination of war.

Secondly, I inſiſt that miniſters cannot now perſiſt without proving to every man who has one grain of underſtanding, that they have groſsly and ſcandalouſly deceived the public, as to the profeſſed objects of the war, which were declared to be ſolely our own ſafety and that of our allies the

Dutch. It is now within the reach of every capacity, that both theſe objects will be better ſecured by peace than war, under the preſent circumſtances of France; and in defence of this poſition I ſhall offer two arguments. The *firſt* is, indeed, what I have principally urged in the preceding letter, namely, the danger that threatens the independence of this country, from the powerful combination againſt France; and the *ſecond* ariſes from the poſſibility of that country being at laſt victorious.

Let us ſuppoſe the latter to happen—what will be our ſituation? France will ſay—How, treat with England! She would liſten to no terms in the hour of our adverſity, but was fully intent upon our deſtruction—what reliance can we have upon her in our proſperity? The ſword began, and ſhall end the diſpute—ſhe would have forced us to have a king, and as it is our intereſt, we will

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compel her, if poſſible, to do without one, for we perceive ſuch a government to be *eſſentially* at enmity with our own.

This is preciſely the moment for England to be juſt and wiſe, by demonſtrating that ſhe neither wiſhes to interfere with the internal concerns of France, or to continue a war of vengeance or extermination. By ſuch a judicious conduct, an independent union between the French republic and Britiſh monarchy may be eſtabliſhed, ſo that the miniſters of the latter may long enjoy the glorious advantages they now poſſeſs, and place and penſion deſcend peaceably from generation to generation.

It is very ſurprizing that full of anxiety and tender care as our miniſters muſt naturally be on this momentous queſtion, they ſhould have ſo egregiouſly miſtaken how to promote their own ends. French principles

are certainly inimical to them, but their operation muſt be very ſlow in this country, where the people never think until they feel —poverty and diſtreſs, which accumulate ſo faſt, will aſſail miniſters, if they do not mind more ſpeedily and more effectually.

FINIS.